

# Ridgewood School

## Inspection report

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<b>Unique Reference Number</b>	106789
<b>Local Authority</b>	Doncaster
<b>Inspection number</b>	324466
<b>Inspection dates</b>	4–5 June 2009
<b>Reporting inspector</b>	Bernard Campbell HMI

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

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<b>Type of school</b>	Secondary
<b>School category</b>	Community
<b>Age range of pupils</b>	11–16
<b>Gender of pupils</b>	Mixed
<b>Number on roll</b>	
School (total)	1287
<b>Appropriate authority</b>	The governing body
<b>Chair</b>	Mr R Hall
<b>Headteacher</b>	Mr C Hoyle
<b>Date of previous school inspection</b>	22 February 2006
<b>School address</b>	Barnsley Road Scawsby Doncaster South Yorkshire DN5 7UB
<b>Telephone number</b>	01302 783939
<b>Fax number</b>	01302 390448

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## Introduction

The inspection was carried out by one of Her Majesty's Inspectors and four additional inspectors.

## Description of the school

The school is larger than average. The percentage of students taking up free school meals is well below average and social disadvantage is below average. There are few minority ethnic students. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is below average, although the proportion with a statement of special educational need is average. The school has a resource for pupils with hearing or visual impairment. In addition to its engineering specialism, Ridgewood School gained an additional specialism in applied learning in 2008. The school has national pathfinder status for the STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) programme, the International Schools Award and the Healthy Schools Award. The school will open a sixth form in September 2010.

## Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

## Overall effectiveness of the school

### Grade: 2

Ridgewood is a good school with outstanding features. Achievement is good. Students enter the school with standards that are above average and they leave with standards that are significantly above average. The school consistently meets or exceeds its challenging targets for attainment in the specialist subjects of engineering, technology, mathematics and science. Students make good progress, particularly in vocational courses. Lower ability students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities achieve exceptionally well due the highly effective alternative curricular provision and the strong care, guidance and support they receive.

The school is a harmonious community reflecting the good spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students who are very well supported by all adults in the school. The opportunities for students to develop workplace and other skills are outstanding and as a result the vast majority of students currently leave school and go into education, training or employment.

Teaching and learning are good. Teachers have good subject knowledge and relationships between students and teachers are good. In most lessons, teachers successfully enable students to be active learners. In a few lessons, teachers talk too much, or a lack of pace limits the engagement of students and this can slow their progress. While teachers give good written feedback on students' work in the periodic assessments, overall the quality of day-to-day marking is inconsistent.

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and as a result Ridgewood is a very inclusive school. The highly skilled pastoral team, well supported by an array of outside agencies, work very well together making intelligent use of academic, behavioural and attitudinal data to put in place highly personalised support. This ensures that students whatever their learning, physical and emotional needs attend regularly, achieve well and develop positive attitudes towards themselves and school.

The leadership and management of the school's specialisms in engineering technology and applied learning are excellent and have resulted in curricular innovations that have improved achievement and student engagement. Links with businesses are excellent, and extra-curricular opportunities are challenging and exciting. The successful involvement of girls and boys in equally high numbers in engineering, construction and catering is an exceptional achievement. The school has extended the range of courses available to students and enters students early for qualifications if they are ready, which has enabled them to achieve a greater number and diversity of qualifications and to move on to higher level courses more quickly.

A relatively small but significant number of parents responding to the Ofsted questionnaire think that there is insufficient communication from leaders about early entry to examinations, the number of courses students take and insufficient opportunity for parents to discuss any concerns they might have. The school is aware of this issue and plans are at an advanced stage to improve on-line computer access for parents and students to information about the curriculum and to make it easier for parents to email the school about their queries. There is good communication with parents and external agencies to support the school's pastoral work.

Leadership and management are good overall. The strong vision and excellent leadership provided by the headteacher has led to sustained improvements in the quality of provision and student outcomes. Over the longer term this has had the impact of changing the school from an ordinary secondary school to one with a national reputation for excellence in its specialism.

Further major developments are in hand with the opening of a new sixth form. The school has an outstanding capacity for further improvement.

### **What the school should do to improve further**

- Ensure that all teaching engages students and encourages them to be active learners to improve their progress.
- Support the good quality of periodic assessments with more frequent and consistent day-to-day marking.

## **Achievement and standards**

### **Grade: 2**

Since the last inspection the proportion of students gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics has been significantly above average and has risen in line with the national trend, although the increase is greater when the tests in functional skills in English and mathematics are included. The proportion gaining five good GCSEs, without English and mathematics, rose to a high in 2007 but fell back to above average in 2008. School assessments indicate improved performance in the proportions gaining five good GCSEs in 2009. The percentage gaining a qualification in modern languages is below average. However, the school is tackling this effectively by expanding opportunities to take National Vocational Qualifications in languages and by including language units in business studies with planned expansion to other courses.

In 2007 and 2008, the progress Year 11 students made from Year 7 was good overall. School assessment data indicates that students are on track to make good progress in the 2009 GCSE exams. In 2008, students made satisfactory progress in gaining five good GCSEs including English and mathematics. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with visual or hearing impairment, make outstanding progress because of the highly personalised support they receive, the excellent range of opportunities to gain accreditation and their very good participation in specialist school challenges and clubs.

At Key Stage 3, standards are above average. In 2007 and 2008, the school identified that too few of the more-able students achieved Level 6. In 2008, to accelerate achievement at Key Stage 3 the school entered approximately 60% of Year 8 students for the tests and almost all achieved Level 5. Teacher assessments indicate that these students, now in Year 9, are making good progress in their GCSE courses in English, mathematics and science. In addition, the school has an effective programme of tracking and intervention to ensure support and challenge for students with higher abilities and particular talents. The school has also enhanced the leadership in science and English to increase enjoyment in science and achievement in English.

Now the national tests at Key Stage 3 have ended, the school is developing an alternative system of assessed portfolios of work to recognise and give status to achievements in the early years of secondary education. This includes a new and well planned programme to accredit students' applied learning and thinking skills across all subjects in the Key Stage 3 curriculum.

## **Personal development and well-being**

### **Grade: 2**

Students' personal development and well-being are good and students enjoy school. Behaviour in the vast majority of lessons is good. Students report that there are very few incidents of bullying and confirm that they are resolved quickly. There have been no permanent exclusions.

from the school for several years and fixed term exclusions are low. Attendance is above the national average and improving, especially because older students are following courses that they enjoy and in which they can succeed. Student movement around the school is very orderly. However, the geography of the school site, coupled with the number of lesson changes, makes it hard for students to always arrive on time for the start of lessons. Students adopt healthy life styles, particularly the younger ones who have no recollection of the time when less healthy food options were available. Students display an outstanding regard for their own safety and that of other students and are very appreciative of the practical steps taken by staff to promote their emotional health and well-being, particularly when they are experiencing difficulties. There are many opportunities for students to contribute to the life of the school which helps to develop a sense of belonging within the school community. Staff listen increasingly well to issues and concerns raised by students and where possible make changes. Students gain good understanding about future pathways, especially in engineering related fields and they are well-equipped with knowledge, skills and attitudes for the world of work.

## **Quality of provision**

### **Teaching and learning**

#### **Grade: 2**

Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and starter activities are used effectively to engage students and stimulate deep thinking. Learning objectives are routinely shared with students and revisited both during the lesson and in the plenary. Relationships are good, students behave well, are keen to learn and participate enthusiastically. Staff have high expectations and students respond positively to a shared sense of purpose. Students listen well, are confident to ask questions, contribute to discussion and respect each other's views. Students who find learning more difficult are well supported. A working group has been established for teachers to collaborate and share best practice across different subjects, which has led to more varied and practical approaches to learning. In the best lessons, students work well in pairs or groups supporting and extending each other's learning and learn independently using a range of learning styles. For example, in music, students developed their critical thinking by using the Internet to research interpretations of a poem.

In many lessons teachers use challenging and acute questions to extend students' learning, but this approach is not consistent throughout the school. In a few lessons, the pace and variety of activity to engage students fully is too limited with too much talking by teachers. Formal written assessment of students' work is generally rigorous and students are aware of their levels. In a number of cases, day-to-day marking of students' work is not frequent enough and written comments lack constructive advice about how to improve.

### **Curriculum and other activities**

#### **Grade: 1**

The outstanding curriculum is innovative and outward looking and makes an important contribution to students' good achievement and personal development. In all years, and particularly in Years 10 and 11, the curriculum meets individuals' needs exceptionally well, whether they are suited to academic or more vocational courses. A significant number of students in Years 10 and 11 follow a well-organised alternative programme tailored to individual needs, in partnership with local college, industrial and business providers. The curriculum meets statutory requirements and within this there is an unusually wide choice of subjects, particularly

in engineering and design and technology. Two languages and three sciences are available as well as a good range of vocational subjects and students speak highly of the well-planned programme to support their personal and emotional development.

Students begin to build up recognised qualifications early. By the end of Year 9 over half take a GCSE in design and technology. A new and ambitious plan for all to achieve a recognised qualification in applied learning by the end of Year 9 is working well. All subjects contribute to this and already students are assembling portfolios and gaining credits.

The curriculum is greatly enriched by constructive links with outside colleges and businesses and through numerous trips and visits. In addition, design and technology and engineering are used regularly to enhance other areas of the curriculum, for example, by designing a place of worship in religious education and sound engineering in music. Enterprise activities start strongly in Year 7 and feature in many initiatives such as an enrichment day for Year 10 with the theme, 'Who Wants to be an Entrepreneur?' Sporting and other competitions broaden students' experience and increase their self-confidence and pride in the school. A notable example was the recent visit of a group of students to Washington DC to take part in the USA robotics competition.

## **Care, guidance and support**

### **Grade: 1**

Care, guidance and support are outstanding and underpin Ridgewood's inclusive nature. The school has successfully reduced absence rates to low levels by carefully monitoring and promoting good attendance and working closely with the education welfare officer. Very effective procedures for health and safety are in place to overcome the difficulties presented by the school buildings, especially for visually impaired students. Safeguarding procedures meet current government requirements. The provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, gifted and talented, vulnerable students and students at risk of underachieving is exemplary. Students speak highly of the support they receive from staff including the learning mentors and behaviour support officers. Whole-school systems to track student progress are well embedded and central to the raising of standards at the school. Periodic assessment is good. Students' work is accurately assessed and challenging targets are set and regularly reviewed in all subjects. Parents and carers are very well informed about the progress their children are making at the school. Transitional arrangements into the school in Year 7 are good and throughout school students receive high quality information, advice and guidance enabling many to make well informed choices about their future.

## **Leadership and management**

### **Grade: 2**

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides staff with very clear direction and strong leadership. His well-articulated vision for the curriculum and the school's specialist status have contributed significantly to the good and improved achievement of all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. His vision and track record of success has also led to the decision to open a sixth form at the school.

Systems of accountability are good and middle managers are well led and supported by the senior leadership and management team. The school has developed the roles of student support staff very effectively and they make a significant contribution to supporting students' behaviour

and learning. Systems of management and administration are highly efficient and effective. Good lines of communication between staff at all levels are maintained through regular meetings in subject or area groupings. All staff have been empowered to look critically at what they are doing and have taken an increased level of responsibility for making improvements. The quality of departmental evaluation has improved since the last inspection due to more rigorous systems of analysis and more systematic reporting on progress and performance. Subject and sector leaders have taken on a greater level of responsibility for monitoring and improving the quality of teaching and learning and this has been moderated effectively by senior managers with the support of external consultants. In addition, there have been recent changes to strengthen the leadership and management to tackle weaknesses in some subject areas. The school is increasingly using students' views of the school to evaluate and improve provision. Challenging targets are set and monitored closely, which successfully promotes students' progress and personal development.

The school's contribution to community cohesion is good. The school has an effective strategy for engaging with the local community led by the specialist areas of work. Opportunities to develop students' understanding of the local and wider community are systematically planned for at whole-school and departmental level, and multicultural dimensions are well documented in schemes of work. The school's international policy is communicated through alternative curriculum days and is regularly audited. The outstanding progress made by students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities and the high participation by boys and girls in non-traditional areas of the curriculum demonstrate that equal opportunities are strongly embedded in the school culture. The governing body is well-informed and supportive and brings a good range of professional expertise to its monitoring of school progress and performance.



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## Annex A

## Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall
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### Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	2
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	1

### Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2
The standards <sup>1</sup> reached by learners	2
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	1

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<sup>1</sup>Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

## Personal development and well-being

<b>How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?</b>	2
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	2
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	2
The attendance of learners	2
The behaviour of learners	2
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	2
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	1

## The quality of provision

<b>How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?</b>	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1

## Leadership and management

<b>How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?</b>	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	1
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	1
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	1
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	2
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No

**Annex B****Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

Following our visit to your school, on behalf of all the inspectors, I would like to thank you all for your welcome. I particularly thank those of you who spoke to members of the inspection team in meetings, around the school and in lessons. You had many good things to say about your school. Inspectors agreed with much of what you said. This is what we found.

Ridgewood is a good school with outstanding features. You achieve well and standards are above average, particularly in the specialist subject areas. You have exceptionally good opportunities to follow vocational courses and develop skills for further and higher education and the workplace. You enjoy the extra-curricular sporting and other activities and you have good opportunities to get involved in some exciting challenges. Your behaviour and attendance are good. You spoke very highly of the support you receive from staff, including the behaviour support and learning mentors, and we decided that the care and guidance you receive is outstanding. Teaching and learning are good in most lessons, but the variety and pace is limited in a few. Your progress is tracked carefully with regular well-marked assessments, but in between these assessments your work is not always routinely marked. The school is well led and has worked successfully to improve your achievement and your opportunities for personal development.

I agree with the headteacher and governors that these are the areas for further improvement.

- Improve the proportion of good teaching and learning, especially in the core subjects, to accelerate students' progress.
- Support the good quality of periodic assessments with more frequent and consistent day-to-day marking.

I wish you every success in the future.